

Argentina approves terrorism crackdown

By Jennifer Lipman, December 23, 2011



More than 80 people died in the AMIA blast

Argentina's senate has approved a set of tough new laws to target terrorism in the country, 17 years after 85 people died in an attack on a Buenos Aires Jewish centre.

The new laws, which have been criticised by human rights groups because they could enable the government to take on political opponents, were agreed on after three hours of debate.

Under the new laws, crimes "committed with the goal of terrorism as described by international rules approved by [Argentina] will be punishable by twice the minimum and maximum sentence".

Argentina's existing terrorism laws have been called into question in recent years for not being stringent enough. They were not applied to the investigations to convict people for two terrorist attacks on Jewish sites in the country.

In 1992 a bomb destroyed the Israeli embassy complex, killing 29 people. Two years later, 85 people died when the Buenos Aires Jewish-Argentine Mutual Association was bombed. The blast reduced the seven-floor building to a pile of rubble.

Investigators have linked Iran to both attacks, and six Iranians are on Interpol's most wanted list for suspected involvement in the AMIA blast, but no arrests have been made.